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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 002829

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SUBJECT: THE OUTSIDERS: BRV RECRUITMENT OF ROGUE STATES

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT R. DOWNES FOR 1.4 (D)

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) President Chavez' September 5-7 meeting with Belarussian government officials provides another example of the BRV's strategic partnerships with the most troublesome of bedfellows. In part through his extensive international travel schedule, Chavez has strengthened ties around the globe to increase his international stature and to campaign for UNSC votes through petroleum deals and other agreements. However, an agenda item of at least equal importance has been the recruitment of controversial partners - such as Syria, Iran and other fringe states - for his "revolution." While effectively spreading anti-US rhetoric to nations who hardly need the encouragement, Venezuela anchors much of its bilateral diplomacy in forging mutual crusades against the "American empire." End Summary.

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Rallying the Troops  
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¶2. (SBU) During Belarus' and Venezuela's First Meeting of the High-Level Joint Commission, held in Caracas September 5-7, President Chavez and other top BRV officials met with a Belarussian delegation headed by State Secretary of the Security Council Viktor Sheiman. The Commission, proposed during Chavez' visit to Minsk in July, arrived at 23 bilateral cooperation agreements ranging from matters of defense, energy, agriculture, trade to technology. In addition, Sheiman announced Belarus' support for Venezuela's UNSC bid. While the formation of technical and diplomatic agreements formed the substance of the meetings, President Chavez used the opportunity to further demonstrate the BRV's ability at courting rogue nations for U.S.-bashing. During both the committee's opening and closing statements, Chavez used his floor time to condemn American hegemony and promote a "new world order" rather than to focus on the nuts and bolts of Belarussian-Venezuelan relations.

¶3. (SBU) Similarly, during a visit to Syria in late August, Chavez and President al-Asad signed multiple bilateral agreements covering the standard topics of cooperation - petroleum, agriculture, commerce, etc. As with Venezuela's discussions with Belarus, these agreements appeared secondary

to joint Syrian-Venezuelan anti-U.S. rhetoric. Echoing standard Chavez-speak, the two heads of state reiterated their determination to fight hegemony and US imperialism. Al-Asad expressed his concern for US aggression towards Venezuela and announced that Syria would vote in favor of Venezuela's bid for a UNSC seat. Akin to Chavez' agreement with Belarus to form a joint commission, Venezuela and Syria also expressed plans to create a high-level committee to facilitate future cooperation.

¶4. (SBU) To further display his willingness to call on worrisome world leaders, President Chavez visited Teheran in late July. When not signing accords with President Ahmadinejad, he took the time to call upon his Iranian audience to assist in bringing down the US empire in order to save the human race. Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad will visit Venezuela beginning September 16.

¶5. (SBU) In an example of the success of his campaign to gain support from nations oftentimes in disagreement with U.S. policy, President Chavez announced September 11 that the Arab League - 22 countries in all -- had voted to support Venezuela in its bid for a non-permanent seat in the UNSC. Venezuela holds observer nation status in the League.

¶6. (SBU) Chavez is currently participating in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Havana September 12-16. Venezuela, reportedly supported by Iran, Belarus, Syria and others, hopes to insert in the summit an expression of concern for the United States' "destabilizing" actions in Venezuela. Finally, creating yet another opportunity for Venezuela to work closely with countries of interest to the United States, Iran will assume the presidency of the Group of 15 - of which Venezuela is a member - during meetings concurrent with the NAM summit.

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Comment

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¶7. (C) Chavez has made great efforts to win over like-minded pals around the world, the majority of which already have their own motivations for opposing the United States. His campaign is winning him some rhetorical support from countries like these. What is not clear at this point is whether opposition to U.S. policies is a sufficient unifying force for the global movement Chavez aspires to lead, or whether Chavez would be the gentleman to assume such a role. For now, his strident, all-encompassing opposition to all things American -- as well as his fat and open checkbook -- are winning him friends in unusual places.

WHITAKER